

Fire agencies tour Shingletown fuel breaks, prepare for next year



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SHINGLETOWN, Calif. -

About two dozen people braved the cold for a Fuel Break Construction and Maintenance Field Tour in Shingletown on Monday.

The event was hosted by the UC Cooperative Extension as a way to educate the public about field breaks and to discuss techniques with other fire agencies throughout the Northstate.

Rain in the valley and snow in the mountain didn't give the idea of wildfire season, but officials with CAL FIRE said now is the time to prepare for next year.

"Just because fire season is near, towards, an end doesn't necessarily mean that we're outside of the danger," Shane Larsen, forester for the Shasta-Trinity Unit, said.

That includes the construction of fuel breaks throughout the region and maintaining them during the winter months.

"Typically in the winter, our crews, since they won't be responding to wildfire incidents, that's when we'll be doing a lot of maintenance on our projects or a lot of projects with our partners. That way we're able to keep them busy on the off time and outside of fire season," said Larsen.

CAL FIRE was just one of several presenters at the field tour. They talked about the importance of clearing trees and bushes to slow the growth of wildfires.

UC Cooperative Extension Forestry Advisory Ryan DeSantis said fuel breaks were critical for the town of Old Station during the Eiler Fire in 2014.

"Part of the reason it didn't burn down is because of all the fuel breaks that the forest service had implemented around that general area. The majority of fires we see are impeded by fuel breaks. They give firefighters time and safer places to fight fires," said DeSantis.

Other topics discussed during the field tour included maintaining current fuel breaks both with and without herbicide.

"It's good to have everyone come to the table, all the different organizations all the different agencies and get together to discuss what the issues are and how to get through them," said DeSantis.

One issue each agency faces is a lack of funding. They often complete for grants from groups such as the National Resource Conservation Service and the Sierra Nevada Corporation, both represented at the event.

If they get a grant, they can keep the projects to maintain fuel breaks and potentially save homes.

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